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ABSTRACT

The relationship between linguistic awareness (assessed by the Surface Structure Utilization Test and Word Usage Recovery Test) and reading comprehension (assessed by a fifth-word deletion cloze test and by the Metropolitan Reading Subtest Form F, 1970) was examined among 153 fourth graders, 174 sixth graders, and 132 eighth graders. The correlations between the composite linguistic test and reading tests ranged from .66 to .74. The findings suggest that a fundamental aspect of reading comprehension is the ability to apprehend cues from the function words, inflectional endings, and word order of written English. (Author)

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The Relationship Between Linguistic Awareness and Reading Comprehension Among Fourth-, Sixth- and Eighth-Graders

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The Relationship Between Linguistic Awareness and Reading Comprehension among Fourth-, Sixth-, and Eighth-graders (HYP)

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The relationship between linguistic awareness, assessed by the Surface Structure Utilization Test and Word Usage Recovery Test and reading comprehension, assessed by a fifth-word deletion Cloze test and by the Metropolitan Reading Subtest Form F (1970), was examined among 153 fourth-, 174 sixth-, and 132 eighth-graders. The correlations between the composite linguistic test and reading tests ranged from .66 to .74. The findings suggest that a fundamental aspect of reading comprehension is the ability to apprehend cues from the function words, inflectional endings, and word order of written English.

The Relationship Between Linguistic Awareness and Reading Comprehension Among Fourth-, Sixth-, and Eighth-Graders

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The purpose of this study was to assess the relationship between linguistic awareness and reading comprehension among fourth-, sixth-, and eighth-graders. Since Hoyt first examined the relationship between the grammatical analysis of and interpretation of literature (1906), there has been a tradition of correlational studies directed at investigating the relationship between reading comprehension and knowledge of grammar. All such investigations have resulted in low correlations and the conclusion that mastery of grammar, traditional or structural, fails to guarantee success in reading. (Hoyt, 1906; Rap[illegible], 1913; O'Donnel, 1962).

However, there is an increasing body of evidence from psycholinguistic research supporting the notion that grammatical structure is an important cue system in the reading process (Ford and Levin, 1967; Kolers, 1970). Therefore, this study was conducted in order to re-examine the relationship between grammatical knowledge (termed here linguistic awareness) and reading comprehension. Linguistic awareness was assessed by the Surface Structure Utilization Test and the Word Usage Recovery Test, two tests employing nonsense syllables which were developed by the investigator. Reading comprehension was measured by a three paragraph, fifth-word deletion Cloze test and by the Reading Subtest of the Metropolitan Achievement Test, Form F (1970). This study differed from its predecessors in three major respects: 1) the linguistic tests were designed to assess subjects' abilities to utilize the grammatical cue systems of word order, inflectional endings and function words in the surface structure of written English; 2) a Cloze test was the primary measure of reading comprehension, and 3) the tests were administered across three middle grade levels--fourth, sixth, and eighth--in order to examine the relationship of linguistic awareness and reading comprehension from a developmental point of view.

The Cloze test and linguistic tests were administered to 153 fourth-, 174 sixth-, and 132 eighth-graders during January and the first week of February, 1975. Data were also collected on the Metropolitan Achievement Test, Form F (1970), and the Otis-Lennon Mental Ability Test, Form J (1971).

The hypotheses and findings follow:

Hypothesis I. Children's linguistic awareness as is measured compositely by the Surface Structure Utilization Test and the Word Usage Recovery Test is positively related to reading comprehension as is measured by a fifth word deletion Cloze test and by the Metropolitan Achievement Test.

Results.--The correlations between the combined linguistic measure and the reading tests ranged from .66 to .74.

--The disattenuated correlations between the combined linguistic measure and the reading tests ranged from .72 to .82.

Hypothesis II. The relationship between linguistic awareness, as is measured compositely by the Surface Structure Utilization Test and Word Usage Recovery Test, and reading comprehension, as is measured separately by a fifth word deletion Cloze test and Metropolitan Reading Subtest, will remain constant over grades four, six, and eight.

Results. The correlations between linguistic awareness and reading comprehension remained constant over grades four, six, and eight.

These correlations compared favorably with those reported in earlier, parallel studies: .35, Hoyt (1906); .2, Rapeer (1913); .44 and .46, O'Donnel (1962). Unlike these earlier researchers, the present investigator concluded that instruction in certain grammatical aspects of language may enhance children's reading comprehension abilities if such instruction involves interpreting cue systems (word order, inflectional endings, and function words) in the surface structure of written English.

It is interesting to compare these findings with those reported by O'Donnel, whose study (1962) most closely parallels this one. He obtained a correlation of .44 between a test of structural linguistics and a standardized reading test, and of .46 between a test of traditional grammar and the reading test after administering the three tests to 101 high school seniors. O'Donnel's correlations were substantially lower than those between the linguistic measures and reading measures reported in the present investigation.

Even after intelligence was statistically partialed out in the present study, the correlations between the Cloze and the linguistic measures remained moderate. It is interesting to note that the multiple correlations

between the Cloze and the combined linguistic tests were higher (.58 for the combined grades) than those reported by O'Donnel in which the effect of intelligence was never removed.

There are three plausible explanations for the differences between the correlations reported by O'Donnel and the author: 1) It is possible that the relationship between reading comprehension and grammatical knowledge is less at the twelfth-grade level than it is for grades four, six and eight. 2) There may have been less variability among his sample of twelfth-graders in the present study, a sampling error which would result in reduced correlation coefficients. 3) It may be that there were differences between what was measured by the grammatical tests employed by O'Donnel and what was measured by the Surface Structure Utilization Test and Word Usage Recovery Test. Since standardized reading tests were employed in both studies, it does not seem likely that differences in measures of reading comprehension would account for the divergent correlations.

Because of studies such as those by Hoyt, Rapeer, and O'Donnel, there has been a general trend in the public schools away from formal language study, on the assumption that there are no practical benefits to be gained from it. There is also a general tendency among many teachers and reading specialists to overlook and obscure certain key features of language in rather fuzzy taxonomies and descriptions of reading skills. The present investigation revealed that an awareness of three language cue systems in the structure of English (word order, function words, and inflectional endings) is substantially correlated with two measures of reading comprehension. This is not to mention anaphora, or other cue systems such as sentence order, which signal relationships between sentences, paragraphs, and larger units of discourse. Additional research is needed to answer the question: which aspects of language study, if any, do facilitate the language-based skills of reading (and writing)? Addressing this question is imperative, or we run the risk of allowing schools to throw away the baby with the bath water.

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APPENDIX A

Word Usage Recovery Test

After every number, you will see a nonsense word. Each nonsense word has been give a meaning, and is then used in some sentences. In all but one of these sentences, the word has been used correctly, but one is not used correctly. Find the sentence in which the word does not seem to fit or make sense and darken the letter of that sentence on your answer sheet. Don't spend too long thinking about each one. Just pick the one that you think seems wrong and then mark that answer on your answer sheet. DO NOT WRITE ON THIS TEST! See the example below.

1. ric--an animal often made into a pet
   a. The rics ate from a dish.
   b. The boy fed his rics.
   c. He tossed the rics some meat.
   d. He rics in his cage.
   e. I gave a toy to my ric.

The sentence with the incorrect usage is d., and so you would very carefully darken the D after number 1 on your answer sheet in between the lines. Do this now after number 1 as neatly as you can for practice. Be sure to stay in between the lines. Now go on to number 2 below, and mark your answers on the answer sheet.

_____

2. lun--nice; good to other people
   a. Ken is always lun to everyone
   b. He liked lun helped the people.
   c. Jan thanked the lun man.
   d. The lun man is very well liked.
   e. Mr. Black is not a lun person.

3. heb--turn around many times in circles.
   a. Try to heb this top.
   b. We took pictures of Mary, hebbing on many rides.
   c. Hebbing fast is fun for Bert.
   d. The hebs got sick from going so fast.

4. wol--a state of great pleasure or joy.
   a. You have to work for wol.
   b. He was so happy, he danced wol sang.
   c. He has never known wol in his life.
   d. His goal in life is wol.
   e. Juan's wol was destroyed that day.

5. deb--busy; always doing something.
   a. She has always been a deb.
   b. She is always deb.
   c. The deb woman never rested.
   d. I had to call the deb man on the phone.
   e. The President is a deb person.

6. moz--do a lot of damage to
   a. The child did not mean to moz his toy.
   b. The dog crushed moz chewed the hat.
   c. The little boy liked mozzing everything he touched.
   d. Mozzed by the wind, the house had to be torn down.

7. vem--hit something hard; bump into something
   a. He hurt his head vemly.
   b. I didn't mean to vem it.
   c. Vemmed by the bicycle, the man broke his glasses.
   d. Stop vemming the window.

8. tud--angry.
   a. The tud teacher walked out of the meeting.
   b. She is never tud with her students.
   c. His mother scolded tud punished him.
   d. I don't like tud people.
   e. Joe is a tud person whenever he loses a game.

9. jol--put two or more things together
   a. The man is jolling the pipes now.
   b. Let's see if this wire jols with the other wire.
   c. I talk jol my father on the telephone.
   d. Hank jolled the puzzle pieces.

10. pag--a person who lives close by
    a. Jake, my next-door pag, is never home.
    b. I gave my pag some milk.
    c. Ray pag Louie are my neighbors.
    d. Jan's pag can take it to her.
    e. We have many pags.

11. mur--one who tries to heal the sick.
    a. Get some medicine mur him.
    b. Mr. Smith, the only mur in town, is always busy.
    c. Please tell the mur your name.
    d. The mur is in his office.
    e. The murs met to talk about the plan.

12. vid--quiet, still
    a. Callie is such a vid girl.
    b. You have a vid brother.
    c. The vid cat watched her kittens.
    d. Go talk vid that new shy girl.
    e. The night is very vid.

13. fim--a person who sells hats
    a. The lady in that shop will fim you a hat.
    b. This is Miss Davis, the fim who works in our shop.
    c. You should tell the fim your address.
    d. The fim has lived in town for years.
    e. There are now two fims who work here.

14. daj--burn a little bit
    a. I didn't mean to daj it.
    b. The napkin got hot daj the edges when she ironed it.
    c. Dajjed by the fire, the paper looked very old.
    d. Dajjing popcorn makes it taste good.

15. dub--a place in which a dead body is buried
    a. She places flowers on the dub every year.
    b. Never visit that dub during the night.
    c. This spot shall be his dub.
    d. I'm scared to go dub that spot.
    e. The dub was discovered.

16. teb--a group of twenty things
    a. He tebly counted forty cookies.
    b. Count them into tebs.
    c. Give me one teb, please.
    d. That is one teb.
    e. Three tebs were counted out by the banker.

17. lom--happy
    a. The boy walked lom the party.
    b. The lom girl jumped up and down.
    c. Mary is always lom.
    d. He gave the gift to the lom child.
    e. This is a lom story.

18. cif--make a hole in the ground
    a. She doesn't like to cif before planting a garden.
    b. The cif dug in his garden.
    c. I saw you ciffing the other day.
    d. Joe doesn't mind the ciffing.

19. dar--wipe clean with a rag
    a. She is daring it now.
    b. May dars her things everyday.
    c. The dar is clean and shiny now.
    d. Rob darred his car yesterday.

20. zop--sing with closed lips.
    a. Barry likes to hum zoply.
    b. Why is he zopping?
    c. Everyday while cleaning up, the maid zops.
    d. Rich was so happy he zopped all day.

21. wap--the leader of a city
    a. I spoke to Mr. Brown, the new wap.
    b. Tell the wap your idea.
    c. The wap is going to a meeting.
    d. Many waps were there.
    e. He acted waply even before he was in office.

22. wug--not care for or dislike
    a. I am wugging this movie.
    b. He won't eat spinach wug tomatoes.
    c. She wugs no one.
    d. There is no one that Dan has ever wugged.

23. kef--a man who runs a farm.
    a. Go say hi to Joe, the kef who is in the red shirt.
    b. Give the kef some money for the eggs.
    c. The kef enjoys his work.
    d. He really likes keffing.
    e. Many kefs were happy to see the rain.

24. gil--fearful of being blamed.
    a. The gil ran away after breaking the cup.
    b. My uncle is a gil person.
    c. I will talk to the gil boy.
    d. The gil child blushed when spoken to.
    e. Joe felt gil around his teacher.

STOP!

Surface Structure Utilization Test

After every letter you will see a sentence made out of nonsense words. Read the sentence and the questions following it and choose the correct answer. Find the letter next to the correct answer on your answer sheet and darken it neatly between the lines. Look at this example:

Ex. The zum will gol the dep in the sul.
    25. What will be golled?
        a. The zum
        b. The gol.
        c. The dep
        d. The sul

The correct answer is the dep and so you would darken c. after 26 on your answer sheet. Do that now. Now look at the next example:

    26. Who will do it?
        a. the zum
        b. the gol
        c. the dep
        d. the sul

the correct answer is the zum (who will do the golling) so darken a. after 27 on your answer sheet. Now continue with 28 and finish the test.

A. The lon's hus will nur the nuc.

27. What will be nurred?
    a. the lon
    b. the hus
    c. the nur
    d. the nuc

28. Whose hus is it?
    a. the one belonging to the lon
    b. the one belonging to the hus
    c. the one belonging to the nur
    d. the one belonging to the nuc

B. The bac wuys the hab in the zud.

29. What is being done?
    a. bacing
    b. wuying
    c. habing
    d. zuding

30. Who or what is it being done to?
    a. the bac
    b. the wuys
    c. the hab
    d. the zud

C. The tas was wefed in the yuh's tox.

31. What was done?
    a. tasing
    b. wefing
    c. yuhing
    d. toxing

32. What was wefed?
    a. the tas
    b. the wef
    c. the yuh's
    d. the tox

D. The dun turned hiv about his nem's sez.

33. How did the dun turn?
    a. dun
    b. hiv
    c. nem's
    d. sez

34. What happened in this sentence?
    a. duned
    b. turned
    c. hived
    d. sezed

E. The nuf's tix was rex from the san.

35. Whose tix was it?
    a. belonging to the nuf
    b. belonging to the tix
    c. belonging to the rex
    d. belonging to the san

36. What or how was the tix?
    a. nuf's
    b. tix
    c. rex
    d. san

F. The wim's mox will be bojed in the zoy.

37. Whose mox is it?
    a. the one belonging to the wim
    b. the one belonging to the mox
    c. the one belonging to the bojed
    d. the one belonging to the zoy

38. Who will be bojed?
    a. the wim
    b. the mox
    c. the will
    d. the zoy

G. The tih is feeling guz from his vej on the hul.

39. How is the tih feeling?
    a. guz
    b. vej
    c. hul
    d. on

40. What is happening in the sentence?
    a. tihing
    b. guzing
    c. feeling
    d. vejing

H. The der's rab becomes mev in the wus.

41. What is happening in this sentence?
    a. dering
    b. rabing
    c. becoming
    d. wusing

42. What did the rab become?
    a. der
    b. rab
    c. mev
    d. wus

I. The hon's jom nommed the zut a rik.

43. The jom belongs to
    a. the hon
    b. the nom
    c. the zut
    d. a rik

44. Who was nommed a rik
    a. The hon
    b. the jom
    c. the zut
    d. the rik

J. The res mebs the hus a min.

45. Who is being mebed a min?
    a. the res
    b. the mebs
    c. the hus
    d. a min

46. What is being done?
    a. resing
    b. mebing
    c. husing
    d. mining

K. The goz luxed the jex a kuz.

47. What was done?
    a. gozing
    b. luxing
    c. jexing
    d. kuzing

48. Who was luxed a kuz?
    a. the goz
    b. the lux
    c. the jex
    d. a kuz

L. The kon is voking over the zox of his juf.

49. What is being done?
    a. koning
    b. voking
    c. zoxing
    d. jufing

50. Who is doing it?
    a. The kon
    b. the vok
    c. the zox
    d. the juf

M. The zow is meking her yad a gan.

51. What is happening?
    a. zowing
    b. meking
    c. yading
    d. ganing

52. For whom is a gan being meked?
    a. The zow
    b. the mek
    c. the yad
    d. the gan

N. The yag wivved the jox on the hax

53. What was done?
    a. yaging
    b. wiving
    c. joxing
    d. haxing

54. What was wivved?
    a. the yag
    b. the jox
    c. the wiv
    d. the hax

O. The zan rews on the kav of his haf.

55. What is happening in this sentence?
    a. zaning
    b. rewing
    c. kaving
    d. hafing

56. Who is doing it?
    a. the zan
    b. the rews
    c. the kav
    d. the haf

P. The ner is zotting the jeb inside the zom.

57. What is being done?
    a. nerring
    b. zotting
    c. jebbing
    d. zomming

58. Who is it being done to?
    a. the ner
    b. the zot
    c. the jeb
    d. the zom

APPENDIX B

Cloze Test

There are quite a few blanks in the following paragraphs. Try to fill in one word for every blank so that the paragraph makes sense.

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS COLUMN

1 __ __ __

Busy Katy

Katy's mother asked her to dust the livin room and to make her own room tidy. Katy disliked dusting. She _____ to dust 4 __
slowly. She _____ to dust one of the _____ 5__ __
arms of the big _____ in the corner. She 7__
_____ the legs of the _____ by the window. 8__ __
In _____ corner stood a tall _____ clock. 10__ __
She could not _____ the top, so she _____ 12__ _
not dust up there _____ all. Katy thought 14__
she _____ alone in the room, _____ suddenly 15__ __
she heard someone _____. It was the grand- 17__ __
father _____. It said slowly again _____ 19__ __
again, "Lazy Ka-ty, Lazy _____!" This made 20__ __
Katy so _____ that she started her _____ 22__ __
again, dusting more carefully. _____ 23__

Making a Kite

When you have finished making the frame of the kite, get a piece of strong tissue paper. Cut it the shape _____ a 28__
diamond, just half _____ inch larger than 29__
the _____. Turn the four edges _____ the 30__ __
paper over the _____ and paste them. Now 32__
_____ main part of the _____ is ready. 33__ __
Next make _____ tail for the kite. 35__
_____ a piece of cord _____ thirty 36__ __
inches long. Cut _____ paper into small 38__
pieces, _____ about two inches inches 39__
long _____ one inch wide, _____ these 40__ __
pieces of paper _____ the cord about 42__
three _____ apart. This is the _____ 43__ __
of the kite. Tie _____ to one of the 45__
_____ tips of the diamond-shaped _____. 46__ __
The last thing to _____ is to attach the 48__
_____ of a ball of _____ at the point 49__ __
where _____ sticks are tied together. 51__
Your kite is now ready to fly in the air.

finished dusting the living _____ 24__

and hurried upstairs to _____ own room. 25__

The little _____ there was also talking 26__

_____ her. It said as fast as it could, 27__

"Busy Katy, Busy Katy!"

How I Move

When I was a baby, I couldn't walk. I couldn't pick up _____. As I grew, I _____ to make my hands _____ arms and feet and _____ work for me.

Now _____ use my legs for _____ jobs. I use them _____ walk, skip, jump, run, _____, and climb. My legs _____ bend because they have _____, places that move like _____ hinges on a door. _____ my legs had no _____ joints, I woul n't be _____ to move well. As _____ game, I keep my _____ stiff and try to _____ down and stand up.

_____ arms have joints, too. _____ use my arms to _____, push, pull, lift, throw, _____, do many other jobs. But if I hold my arms out straight and pretend that I have no elbow joints, I can't feed myself.

52__ 54__ __ 55__ 57__ __ 58__ 60__ __ 61__ 62__ 64__ __ 65__ 67__ __ 68__ 69__ 71__ __ 72__